

SPECIAL FEATURE on SAŠA VEČTOMOV

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Birth: 12th November 1930 in Prague

Death: 29th December 1989 in Prague

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Saša Večtomov first started music with the piano and cello with the help of his father Ivan (1902–81), a principal cellist in the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, and also a composer. He entered the Prague Conservatory still under the tutelage of his father, and later at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague alongside Mirko Škampa and Josef Chuchro under Ladislav Zelenka. He then decided to make his advanced studies at the Moscow Conservatory under Semen Kozolupov until 1957, and also attended master classes at Accademia Musicale Chigiana under French cellist André Navarra.

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By then he was already professional; he had already been participant in the formation of the 'Suk Trio' (ever since 1951 in fact) together with the great artists Josef Suk (violin) and Jiří Hubička (piano). In 1956 he also took over from Miloš Sádlo in the Czech Trio, in which group he continued to perform concerts and record discs all his future life.

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Along with Sádlo, Večtomov was considered one of Czechoslovakia's leading classical string artists, and he recorded many works as a solo performer, as well as in radio and television broadcasts. He was a specialist of Czech music, and especially Martinu, drawing attention to his world premiere of the composer's second cello concerto. He was also a most solid interpreter of all the Bach Solo Cello Suites.

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He regularly performed and recorded with his brother, the guitarist Vladimír Večtomov, as the most unusual Prague String Duo, releasing recordings on the Supraphon, Panton, and Melodiya labels. In 2015 the Czech music label 'Uneventful Records' released a CD and digital album of the Prague String Duo's archive recordings - surely fantastic documents to hear!

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As a professor, Večtomov taught at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. His pupils included Michaela Fukačová, Jan Páleníček and Miroslav Petráš. His pedagogical method focused intently on detail, and he was known for his friendly manner. It is even said that in his playing technique he had mastered 30 distinctive types of glissandi! Indeed at the height of his career there were comparisons drawn in the international press to Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, who had been his contemporary at the Moscow Conservatory. Večtomov was best known for his inimitably sweet tone. He played on two instruments, a 1712 Alessandro Gagliano and a 1754 Giovanni Battista Guaragnini.

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He will surely remain of great interest to cellists and collectors in the twenty-first century.



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